



Improved Basic Education in Cambodia Project

APRIL 2014

PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Key Numbers

- More than 90% of Life Skills curriculum has now been approved and adopted by MoEYS.
- 113 secondary schools are implementing Life Skills courses.
- A total of 23,000 secondary school students are benefiting from Life Skills courses across six provinces.
- Directly support 39 community teachers.
- More than 90% of students who dropped out returned to school as a result of peer counseling network



H.E. Hang Chuon Naron, officially inaugurates the new life skills education curriculum developed collaboratively with MoEYS

On 28 January 2014, IBEC publically launched 30 Life Skills manuals developed, piloted and finalized by the project. The manuals will help Cambodian schools improve the way their students learn, whilst making the curriculum more relevant and practical to their daily lives. The Life Skills curriculum is a major milestone for the project and is a culmination of extensive collaboration between the MoEYS, USAID, World Education, and KAPE. USAID Cambodia's Mission Director, Rebecca Black, presided over the launch with H.E. Dr. Hang Chuon Naron, Minister of the MoEYS, and H.E. Dr. Ing Kantha Phavi, Minister of the Ministry of Women's Affairs.



Life Skills



Technology



Student Council



USAID
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Best Practices Workshop for stakeholders in Phnom Penh

Life Skills education since the promulgation of the policy in 2006 was also undertaken. The workshop sought to demonstrate how these lessons had been internalized in the design of the new Life Skills Education Curriculum that was successfully piloted in 2012. The workshop was chaired by H.E. xx and was attended by over 100 colleagues from various government departments and agencies. The project utilized this opportunity to distribute many more manuals, research reports, and other technical documentation developed by the project since its launch in 2009.

Component I: Local NGO and Government Capacity Building, and Advocacy for Sustainability

Sustainability Planning Workshop:

At the end of Year 4, grant support for 61 primary schools and 70 lowers secondary schools from Kampong Cham, Kratie and Siem Reap began a phasing out process. Grant support has now been greatly reduced, linked with sustainability planning by each school, and is now channeled through commune councils with matching contributions from commune investment funds. The Component team has been working with schools and local authorities on the phase out process since the end of Year 3. In previous years, schools received assistance in the development of future sustainability plans and learning how to prioritize their activities, depending on their needs and the availability of local resources. During this quarter, the team conducted a final round

of workshops, finalizing reflections on possible sustainability actions, starting from the identification of resources available in the local area. School directors, Commune Chiefs and other relevant stakeholders were invited to join this last workshop. A key element during the entire process was to create synergies between schools and local authorities to assure strong communication and collaboration in the near future.

Matching Funds and Commune Councils

Since January 2014, communes have disbursed a total of \$20,130 to schools, equal to 84% of the total planned budget. Each of the 25 Communes that are now providing matching funds signed a contract with IBEC between November and December 2013, and a “Cash Advance and Reconciliation” training course was provided in the same period, one in each of the three target Provinces, as reported in the previous quarterly report. After the training, Communes submitted their budget requests in order to start activity implementation. A number of follow-up meetings have occurred during the quarter to ensure disbursements and implementation are on track. Councils are responsible for assuring that schools implement their sustainability plans as scheduled.



Commune Commitment to Education: Commune follow-up meeting during the quarter at Prey Chrouk commune in Siem Reap province.

Component 2: More Equitable School Access

Scholarships:

Scholarship support at primary level has now been fully localized with all funds for this activity currently managed by commune councils and schools themselves. Component personnel met with Local Cluster School Committees in February to review the progress of the activity. Although disbursements were somewhat late this year as a result of the handover, all materials have reportedly been distributed to poor students. A total of 454 students including 242 girls (53%) are receiving scholarship support as a result of these efforts. Province-based offices have reported that 20 primary schools are still supporting these activities through their own resources and in collaboration with communes. No dropouts were reported during the quarter.

At secondary school level, Cohort 3 (entering grade 7 in Year 3) has now reached grade 9. Across the three provinces there were reported to be 659 vulnerable youth still receiving scholarship support, down from 712 at the beginning of the year (a decline of 7%) due to dropout. A disbursement of materials (mainly pens and stationery) was made to all students in February 2014 for the second semester, in 36 schools across the three provinces. Field offices reported that while 94% of beneficiaries were passing their First Term Examinations, an additional 39 students dropped out during the quarter bringing total dropouts to 92 so far this year, or about 13% of the total (15% among girls). The total remaining number of beneficiaries is 620 (396 girls).

Dreaming to Be a Teacher



Ann Chan Roth is a grade 9 student studying at Speu High School in Chamka Leu District, Kampong Cham Province. Her father's name is Meng Kim Ann, a construction worker in Phnom Penh. Her mother's name is Beam Sarum; she works as a rice farmer and stays at home to look after the three children and her elderly mother. Chan Roth's parents used to think of persuading her to stop studying and look for job as a house servant in Malaysia, but she successfully resisted this idea. She likes studying and she has ambitions to be a teacher in the future, if she can. Roth said that receiving a scholarship from IBEC made her study harder and she used to counsel one of her friends who wanted to stop studying to go to Phnom Penh for work to stay enrolled at her school. Along with her scholarship package, Chan Roth has been actively using her learning in Life Skills to raise pigs. Her family received a pig

through IBEC's Schools Helping Family Program (provided by EDA) and since that time, she has been able to sell piglets four times already. Her family has used the money to buy additional piglets and to support her own education and her brothers and sisters. Most recently, her mother just bought four more piglets.

Component 3: Improved School Management & Community Engagement

During the quarter, Component personnel focused on conducting surveys to determine exact figures for teacher loss among those trained in the three target provinces. As noted in other reports, the project has expressed concern about significant movements of state school personnel from year to year, requiring a continuous cycle of re-training for school directors, teachers, librarians, ICT teachers, etc. Such movements greatly undermine sustained outputs in target areas, though it is true that these personnel take the skills that they learn with them to another school. However, the project's design is based on the belief that a school operates as an organic whole with multiple institutional frameworks reinforcing one another.

School directors are trained in a way to support teachers, librarians and computer teachers; librarians are trained in a way to support teachers; and student councils are trained to collaborate with school directors and teachers, etc. Another way of saying this is that the *whole is greater than the sum of the parts*, so when a staff member transfers to another school with a different institutional milieu, it is doubtful that they can use their skills as effectively as in the school in which they were trained. The Component is conducting similar surveys for school managers, librarians, and ICT teachers, which will be compiled into a report for review by USAID and the Ministry as a lesson learned for future programming.

Component 4: Improved Educational Relevance

Life Skills Education:



High Productivity for Life Skills Gardens: A school in Siem Reap has used its life skills expertise in vegetable cultivation to start a very large chili production garden that will also generate income for future replication.

In this quarter Life Skills focused on monitoring and distributing teaching and learning materials comprised of Life Skills Teacher Manuals, learning slides for students, and posters for teaching and learning. 93% of teacher manuals (28 in all) have been approved by the Textbook Review Committee with two rejections due to lack of expertise to review and political sensitivities.

Teacher Education:

The Component reported that 113 secondary schools are implementing Life Skills courses this year, even in spite of the completion of school grant support, as schools reached the end of their development cycles. This speaks the effectiveness of the efforts to ensure sustainability of the Life Skills program. A total of 23,000 secondary school students are benefiting from Life Skills courses across the three domain areas (*Practical Livelihood, Social Relevant and Economic*) in the six target provinces this year.



Trying to Create Rich Learning Environment for Reading and Writing: Grade 1 teacher examines learning aids and assessment tools to monitor students learning.

Improved Access to IT Education:

Component personnel undertook a number of hands-on refresher workshops during the quarter. One round of workshops in the three provinces focused on promoting reading and writing for grade 1 teachers. Teachers reviewed the use of new teaching aids, assessment tools, and set up reading corners in their classrooms. Monitoring and follow-up activities found reasonably good compliance with the content of the workshop. In this regard, 75% of observed classes scored 'good' on a standardized checklist, 15% scored 'satisfactory' while about 10% scored 'poorly.' The Component also worked with 21 Beacon Schools to re-organize Subject Classrooms in Khmer Language, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies, providing new materials in the process.



Learning With Hope: Cambodians youth accessing ICT lab to gain skills of computer literacy at IBEC computer lab in Kampong Cham Province.

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